




Mercurius Religiosus :

Faithfully communicating to the whole Nation,
the Vanity of

CHRISTMAS:

I.

 He Observation of this Feast hath no warrant in the holy Scriptures, for we cannot find that it was ever commanded or practised, either by Christ himselfe, his Apostles, or Apostolicall men, we read how that *Herod* kept his birth day, but not any where that our Saviour or his Disciples did keepe his, which if he had, in likelyhood that would have been mentioned as well as the other: So that the Feast of Christmas, at best, can be but a humane institution; or at worst (and the worst I feare is true) a peece of wil-worship, which God could never indure, he loves to appoint his owne Service, both for manner, matter, time, and all other circumstances, and tis great reason that it should be so. If any shall object, the Churches practise in setting dayes apart, for commemorating great mercies, as the Feast *Purim*, *Hest.* 9. 21. Our fifth of *Novemb.* and other dayes of Thanksgiving: To this I answer, that God himself hath appointed a day in remembrance of his Söns Birth, Death, Resurrection, and all that concerns him, which is the First day of the week commonly known by the name of the Lords Day; Inasmuch then as the Lord hath appointed a time for that purpose, it can bee no lesse then high presumption, and a trenching upon Gods Divine Privilege, to set our posts by his posts; and our thresholds, by his thresholds, *Lev.* 43. 8. which we do, when we adde to his Ordinances, or set up any invention of our owne, with his Institutions: Whereof this Feast of Christmas seemes to bee guilty,

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for that it doth upon the matter imply, that the day which God ordained for the memoriall of Christ was not sufficient, unless we should adde another, or a fitter time then Gods, making our selves wiser then God in this matter.

I I. We know not the Day, nor at what time of the year Christ was born, so that we are very blindly led in setting our devotion so punctually upon the 25. of *December*; for neither the Scripture nor any authentick human writer, do give us the least assurance that this was the day or about the time of his Nativity: The Lord perhaps, purposely concealing the day of his Sons Birth, to prevent the Idolizing of it. God doing by this day, as he did with the body of *Moses*, which he caused to be buried in an unknown place, that the people might not commit Idolatry with it; And tis conceived by good Divines that the contest between *Michael* and the Devill, *Jude 9*. Was on the Devils part to discover where *Moses* lay interred, that so the *Hiracites* (always prone to Idolatry and Superstition) might be drawn to make an Idol of it; But on *Michaels* part to keep it from being seen or known by the people, and so to take away the snare which the Devill would have laid for them: I say, that in all probability, the wisdom and providence of God hath done thus with the Birth-day of Christ, buried it so closely, that no man to this day knowes what day of the week, what week of the month, or what month of the year he was borne on, so that they which will needs worship the day of Christs Nativity, it may justly be said of them, they worship they know not what. And though I will not tax them for setting up an Alter to the unknown God, as the super-superstitious *Athenians* did, *Act, 17. 23*. yet they may be taxed for dedicating a day to Christ in memorial of his Birth, whose Nativity they cannot finde in any Register, yea it may be further said, that in all probability our Saviour was not born on that day, nor at that season of the yeare, but rather in the Summer time, for tis not likely that the people should be called to travell from all parts of *Judea*, to the cheife Cities of their Tribes, *Luk. 2. 3*. In the depth of Winter; nor that the Shepherds could keep the field by night with their flocks at that season of the year. Therefore unlikely that Christ should be born then.

III. This Feast of Christmas was devised by our superstitious An-

Ancestors in meet imitation of the Pagans and Heathenish people who had a Festival called *Saturnalia*, or *Bacchanalia*, consisting of twelve dayes, dedicated to those imaginary Idol Gods, *Saturn* and *Bacchus*, which were spent in games and revellings, but colour'd over with the pretence of Devotion and Sacrificing to those Dietyes : Thus have wee learned and followed their wayes contrary to *Deut.* 18. 9. Tis most certaine that the time of our Christmas Festival is the same with theirs, for as they kept six dayes of the old year, and six dayes of the new year so do we, and as they spent those twelve dayes in Riot, Excesse, and gaming, so do we ; and as they pretended Religion and Piety to their God *Bacchus* or *Saturne*, in the observation of those dayes, so do we pretend Devotion to the memory of our Saviour Christ in the keeping of them, so that upon the matter there is nothing changed but the name of this Feast, from what it was in the dayes of Paganisme : The time of the year is the same, the number of dayes allotted to this Feast the same, the customs and practises upon these days the same, surely the Devil then hath not lost any thing by the hand, nor Jesus Christ gotten much by the change.

IV, The vanity of observing this Feastivall may further appear by the quality of those persons and people who are so zealously addicted to the observation of it, and plead so strongly for it, if we mind them well, we shall finde them to be none of the best, nor to be guilty of over-much knowledge or piety, The Papists generally are extreemly addicted to the solemn keeping of Christmas, but we know them to be grosse Idolaters, and such as pretend to be Christs best friends, but are indeed his worst Enemies, and as for our common Protestant that doats so devoutly upon this time, you shall find him commonly but a statute Christian, sufficiently indowed with ignorance and superstition.

In a word, if all the worshippers of this *Diana* were well examined it would appear that very few of them are such mighty Zealots for Christ indeed, as they would seem to be, by their earnest contending to uphold the Feast of his Nativity : If there were not more of the flesh then the spirit in many men, Christmas would be as little set by as Easter ; Tis the Butlers box, the Cookes feet, the Parsons good cheare, the Sextons vails, the old mans custome, the Plow-mans play dayes, the Tenants rost-meate, the

Land-lords Capons, the School-boys vacation, the Gentryes New-year's gifts, the Duncards good Ale, the Gamesters Delight, the Gluttons Mince-pyes, the Fiddlers meat, drink, and money, and the Devils advantage, that makes so many cry great is *Didna* of the *Ephesians*: It is no wonder then that so many popish, ignorant, idle, deboyst, superstitious, Atheistical, loose, and profane people, are unwilling to part with Christmas, it being a time so suitable to their corrupt humours, and base lusts.

V. Consider, that although piety is pretended, yet al manner of profanenesse is practised these twelve dayes, Custome hath made Christmas a time of Licentious Liberty, for all sorts of persons, as if the remembrance of the grace of God which hath abounded in the gift of Jesus Christ, gave tolleration for men to abound in sin and wickednesse, Gluttony, Drunkenesse, Chambring, wantonnesse, Riot, Excesse. Carding & Dicing, are counted not only lawful, but commendable in Christmas, as if by such doings Christ were honoured, and took delight in these works of darknesse. The world is now grown to that passe, that he who will not run with his Neighbors in this excesse of Christmas ryot, or shews but the least dislike of it, shal be censured for a strange, and rigid spirited man. It is very strange that in these days of the Gospel, the Devil should so delude Christians, as to make them do him service, and yet make them beleeve that they serve Christ; for it is most certain, that according to the usual manner of keeping Christmas here in *England*, the Devil and the Butlers box, have carryed away all the gains from Jesus Christ: For of all the whole year, this time (though set apart for Christ) hath proved the Devils best harvest.

VI. If *Paul* were afraid of the *Gallatians*, that he had bestowed labor in vain amongst them, because they observed some legal Feasts *Gal. 4. 10, 11.* which yet were formerly of divine institution, but abolished by the coming of Christ, how much more may we fear the state of such seeming Christians, as will not be taken off from the keeping of such idle, groundlesse, superstitious and prophane Holy-dayes, as never had any colour of warrant from God, Christ or his Apostles, but were the Inventions either of Pagans or Papists or such like ignorant Idolaters? Doubtlesse the Lord will one day say to the best observers of this time of Christmas, *Who hath required this of you?* In what part of my Word have you found any command or rule for so doing? But

But much more will he expostulate with others of the profane sort, and will say to them, Who gave you this liberty to turn my grace into lasciviousnesse? Why do you celebrate my Sonnes Nativity with the excesse of Ryot? By what warrant do you spend these days and nights so contrary to my Commandements? O certainly it is to be feared that such practises may justly cause the truth of many mens Christianity to be called into question; and questionlesse if *Paul* were now alive amongst us, he would have the same doubt of us he had of the *Galatians*.

Seventhly and lastly, the Vanity of this feast may yet further appear, in that it is almost utterly abolished in all Christian Reformed Churches (but ours) which upon the breaking forth of the light of the Gospel, have abandoned the grosse abuses of this time, as an Heathenish Antichristian practise, becoming none but the children of darknesse. And I do beleve that there are few or none, whose understandings are truly inlightned with the grace of saving knowledge, but do heartily dislike these times, with all the fooleries that belong to them, and dare not allow themselves the liberty that others take.

Objections for keeping Christmas, Answered.

1 *Ob. This day and the other Holy dayes in the Twelftide is solemnized in memorial of our Saviours Nativity, and the rest in honour of the other Saints, to whose names those days are dedicated.*

Ans. 1 We know not that Christ was born on this day.

2 It is more likely that our Saviour was born in Summer.

3 We have neither precept nor practise from Christ or his Apostles, for the keeping of this day.

4 The Sabbath was changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week, in memorial of Christ and his benefits, and is therefore called the Lords day.

5 New-yeers-day is meerly heathenish, and so are the customes belonging to it.

6 The other dayes were instituted by the Popes of Rome, when Antichristian darknesse overspread the face of the earth.

7 This Feast, pretended for the Honour of Christ, and other Saints, yeelds more dishonour to Christ and Christianity, then the whole year besides.

2 Ob. *The observation of Christmas is of great Antiquity, and hath been continued in the Church for many ages.*

Ans. 1. The Popes Kallender is the first Record we have of this Festival; *Augustins* and *Chrysostoms* Nativity Sermons are adulterate, and foisted into their Works.

2 Antiquity without other Authority is no safe rule for Christians to walk by: Superstition, Idolatry, Bigamy, &c, are ancienter then Christmas, yet not tollerable, because they can plead prescription.

3 Ob. *Many learned Bishops, and other eminent men for parts and piety, have observed this Feast, as by their preaching upon it, and pleading for it, appears.*

Ans. 1. Some good Ministers have used to preach upon these days to keep their people out of worse imployment.

2 It is no new thing for Bishops and other learned men, to be maintainers of superstition and profaneness.

3 The Scribes and Pharisees were eminent amongst the people; yet Christ nayled them up for Counterfeits.

4 Godly men may be dim-sighted in some things: *Bernardus non vidit omnia.*

4 Ob. *Almost all men plead for Christmas, and it is kept by a general consent, none dissenting but a few factious precise people.*

Ans. 1 We must not follow a multitude to do evil, *Prov. 1.*

2 If most voyces might carry things, wee should have a mad world, *Paul* had never preached down *Diana* of the *Ephesians*, if the cries of the Common people had been authentically.

3 Those few that dislike the superstition and vanities of this Festival, will be found to out-weigh the giddy ignorant multitude, in point of understanding and piety.

5 Ob. *The long continued custome of observing Christmas may plead for the continuance of it still.*

Ans. 1, Bad customes ought rather to be broken then kept.

2 Tis now high time to put away childish things and to lay aside the works of darknesse, now that the grace of God which brings salvation hath appeared to all men, and teacheth all men to deny ungodlinesse and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, *Tit. 2. 11, 12.*

6 Ob. *Tis a time for feasting, and entertainment of neighbours, and of giving releife and doles to poor people.*

Ans. 1. Hang the Devil if he have not one trick or other to cheate the world withall.

2 Any other time of the year, is as good for that purpose as this.

3 The usuall way of releiving the poor at this time, is, I feare, more out of custom and ostentation, then out of charity and true Devotion.

7. Ob. *Though some have abused this time, as the best things are lyable to abusing, yet the abuse of a thing ought not to take away the use.*

Ans. 1. This rule holds only in things that are in their own nature lawfull and necessary.

2 This festival is in it selfe unnecessary, and unlawful, because without warrant, and the world may very well spare it, and therefore being so extreemly abused, it may and ought to be utterly abolished.

Exhortations.

1 **T**O the Honourable Court of Parliament, that they would cause this Romish Idoll to be ground to powder, and that they would abstain from committing whoredome with it themselves.

2 To the Reverend Assembly of Divines, That they would do something before they part, towards the stigmatizing of this Pagan-Popish Scrumper, that the Nation may be convinced how unfutable Christian practises, are to Christian profession.

3 To the royall City of *London*, That they would banish this grand Impostor, out of the lines of communication that the light of the Gospell may no longer be blemished with the works of Antichristian darknesse.

4 To

4 To all the Clergy of this Nation, That they would no longer give countenance to this ungospel-like foolery, but set themselves to cry it down as a reproach to Christianity, though it be with the losse of some new-years-gifts, and a few customary Christmas dinners.

5 To the two famous Universities: That they would expel this youth-corrupting master of mis-rule out of their Colledges, no matter though the Cook and Butler grumble at it, or the Schollers misse their exceedings for that time.

6 To the Magistrates of *England*, That they would bind this unruly time of Christmas to the good behaviour, or send it away with a passe-port to *Rome* the place of his birth.

7 To the Gentry of this Nation: That they would shut their doores against this mis-begotten Epicure, and not suffer themselves and estates to bee abused any longer for fashion sake, nor let their houses be polluted with the Devils sacrifices.

8 To Almanack makers, That they would leave lying, and either find out the true time of Christs Nativity, or blot it out of their books.

9 To all the people of this Nation, That they would doate no longer upon this *Babylonish* Hag, which hath so long enchanted them with her devout looks, pleasing pastime, and good chear.

Written by him that loves a Choller of Brawne,
and a Mince-pye, as well as any Common-Councell
man in this City.

FINIS.

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